

## 9/11 Health Bill Passes U.S. House, Will Be Signed by President

Wednesday, 22 December 2010

Washington, D.C. - Today, the House of Representatives passed, for the second time, legislation to address the health crisis caused by the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. H.R. 847, the James Zadroga 9/11 Health and Compensation Act, will provide health care for those exposed to toxins released by the collapse of the World Trade Center towers. The bill will also reopen the federal Victim Compensation Fund to provide economic relief to those harmed by the attacks. Earlier today, the Senate passed an amended version of the bill that reduces the bill's cost to \$4.3 billion over five years. A summary of the Senate's changes can be found below.

The bill, sponsored by New York Reps. Carolyn Maloney (D-NY), Jerrold Nadler (D-NY), and Peter King (R-NY), with the support of the entire New York Congressional delegation, will now be sent to President Obama's desk. The President has said that he supports and will sign the legislation.

The passage of H.R. 847 represents a victory for ailing 9/11 first responders and survivors who have waited more than nine years for the federal government to approve a comprehensive plan to deal with the public health disaster caused by the attacks.

"To 9/11 responders and survivors who have suffered for so long: help is finally here. With this vote, Congress repaid a long-overdue debt and answered the emergency calls of thousands of ailing 9/11 first responders and survivors. This bipartisan compromise is a strong program that will save lives," said Maloney. "I thank Speaker Pelosi and Leader Hoyer for their dedication to those who are sick or injured because of 9/11, I applaud Senators Gillibrand and Schumer for brokering the compromise reached today, and I remain eternally grateful to my friends and co-authors, Jerry Nadler and Peter King, and all our colleagues in the New York delegation."

"Today's victory is without a doubt the proudest moment of my 34-year career in government," said Nadler. "Along with Carolyn Maloney, my staff and I have worked on this legislation for literally nine years. We have stood with first responders and community survivors through the numerous lows and battles over the course of years. We have grieved at the many losses - losses due to 9/11-related illnesses and due to cold political odds and seemingly insurmountable hurdles. But, today, thanks to the work and patience of so many responders, survivors, elected officials, and our allies in disparate corners, we have achieved the sweetest of victories. And it comes not a moment too soon. The plight of 9/11 responders and survivors is very serious and immediate. Thousands are sick and, until now, justice has seemed so far away. I am so proud that our government has done precisely what it is here for - to take responsibility for its citizens after the ugliest of attacks against our nation. Thanks goes out in particular to Congresswoman Maloney, Congressman King, Senators Gillibrand and Schumer, John Feal, Manhattan's Community Board 1, my entire staff, and so many others who have done so much."

"This is a great victory for the heroes of September 11th, the firefighters, police officers and construction workers. Justice is finally being served. A great day for America," said King.

The Zadroga Act is historic, but not unprecedented, legislation. In the aftermath of the Pearl Harbor attacks, Congress passed the War Hazards Compensation Act of 1942, which provided health care and financial relief to civilians who helped recover the dead and salvage what remained of our Pacific fleet. In passing the Zadroga Act, Congress has once again demonstrated that our nation will not abandon those harmed by an attack on our shores.

Fact Sheet on Bipartisan Agreement on 9/11 Health and Compensation Act:

The terms of the Senate agreement adopt H.R. 847 with the following changes:

- Provide a total of \$4.3 billion in funding for the health and compensation titles of the bill.

- Cap federal funding for the health program over five years at \$1.5 billion (New York City will contribute 10% of the cost). Any funds not spent in the first five years may be carried over and expended in the sixth year of the program.

- Reopen the Victim Compensation Fund (VCF) for five years to file claims, with payments to be made over six years. Fund the VCF at \$2.8 billion for six years, with \$.8 billion available for payments in the first five years and \$2.0 billion available for payment in year six. Claims will be paid in 2 installments—one payment in the first five years, and a second payment in the sixth year of the program.

- The payfor in the House-passed version of the bill has been replaced by a 2 percent fee on government procurement from foreign companies located in non-GPA countries and a one-year extension of H-B1 and L-1 Visa fees for outsourcing companies. These are estimated by CBO to collect \$4.59 billion over the 10-year scoring period for the bill.

- The bill is not only fully paid for, but will reduce the deficit by \$450 million over the 10-year scoring period.

Others changes made in the bill to address Republican concerns:

- Requiring that the Centers of Excellence report claims data to HHS so that costs and utilization of services can be fully monitored.

- Specifying the non-treatment services furnished by Centers of Excellence to be funded under the health program (e.g. outreach, social services, data collection, development of treatment protocols).

- Authorizing the World Trade Center Program Administrator to designate the Veteran's Administration as a provider for WTC health services.

- Directing the Special Master to develop rules to implement the VCF within 180 days of passage of the legislation.